



Customer Focus

In 1999, Mr. Robert Blackburn's family farm in eastern Forsyth County was enrolled in the Farmland Protection Program (FPP). Many years from now, the 59-acre farm that was purchased by his grandfather 114 years ago will remain in farmland or open space. Funding provided by FPP and Forsyth County's matching farmland preservation program enabled him to keep his land in agriculture.

"I pulled tobacco in that field," he said, pointing to a new development of \$125,000 houses. Instead of tobacco, the farm now grows brick cluster homes. "It's coming from every direction. Everywhere you turn all your farms are gone," said Blackburn.

But Mr. Blackburn has done what he could to draw a line and ensure that, at least here, the houses advance no further. By selling his development rights to Forsyth County, Robert Blackburn's land can never be turned into condominiums, strip malls or business parks. For Blackburn, the decision to sell the developments rights on his land was about preserving the choice for his grandchildren.

"Once you fill it up with houses, it's gone. There ain't no more farming," he said. "I know I could hold off and get more money out of this eight or ten years down the line. But I wanted a place where, if my kids and my grandchildren wanted to grow some vegetables or something, it'll be there."

Farmland Protection Program North Carolina Summary

Overview The USDA Farmland Protection Program (FPP) helps farmers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program assists States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations by purchasing conservation easements for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses. NRCS provides up to 50% of the easement cost to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership. Every protected farm operates under a conservation plan approved by the local Conservation District. Nationally, over \$52 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. Proposals were accepted in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001.

Accomplishments The FPP has been active in North Carolina since 1996 when the first FPP allocation was received. Since 1996, FPP has expanded from one county to three counties. In Forsyth County, the Forsyth County FPP has provided \$331,144 to protect 343 acres. Since 1987, nearly \$3 million of Forsyth City funds have been issued to buy or lease development rights on 1,605 acres of farmland. To date, 27 farms have enrolled in the program with county expenditures at approximately \$2.5 million. In Gaston County, 170 acres in easements have been protected, with Federal shares totaling \$150,000, and a total cost in easements of \$300,000. During 2001, a total of \$578,000 was allocated to three land trusts to purchase conservation easements on over 600 acres of agricultural land.

Outlook According to 1997 NRI data, North Carolina is one of the most rapidly developing states in the nation. Loss of farmland is a primary concern throughout the State; however, the Piedmont region is currently experiencing the greatest development pressures. The interstate corridor from Raleigh to Charlotte is developing at a much greater pace than the rest of the state. Even the Coastal Plain region, where most of the agricultural land is located, is beginning to experience significant urbanization in several counties. From 1999 to 2001, many counties enacted farmland preservation ordinances, established voluntary agricultural districts, and began to explore funding options for purchasing conservation easements. Land trusts continue to play a major role in preserving farmland by identifying potential participants, supplying the matching funds for the FPP grants, and providing the administrative support for acquiring the easements. Since 2000, the State of North Carolina has also provided substantial funds for farmland preservation. Requests for money from counties and land trusts exceed the available public resources, with over \$2 million in matching Federal funds requested in fiscal year 2001. If population continues to increase, as it has in the recent past, the challenge of land use planning to preserve agriculture lands, while meeting the residential and commercial needs of the increasing general public, will be a monumental task.

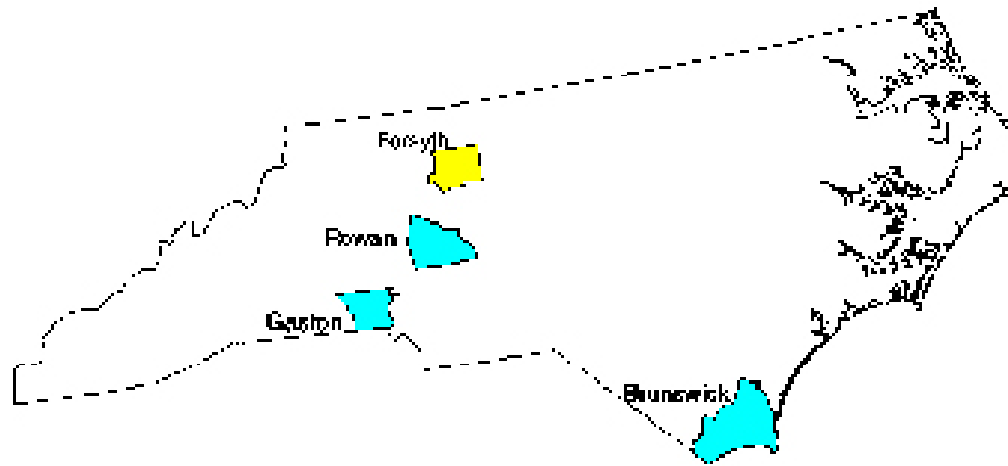


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*Photo of North Carolina
Farmlands*

Photo by: NRCS

FPP Easement Counties: North Carolina



- Counties with pending FPP acreage
- Counties with acquired FPP acreage



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Conservation Lands
Kinston, NC 28501-0001

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North Carolina FPP Easement Counties
County: BRUNSWICK, FORSYTH
County: BRUNSWICK, FORSYTH, GASTON, ROWAN

Farmland Protection Program North Carolina Easements (As of December 2001)

County: Brunswick / Acres: 268
Total Easement Cost: \$520,000
Average per acre: \$1,940
Federal payment amount: \$260,000
Percentage: 50%

County: Forsyth / Acres: 343
Total Easement Cost: \$706,382
Average per acre: \$2,059
Federal payment amount: \$331,144
Percentage: 47%

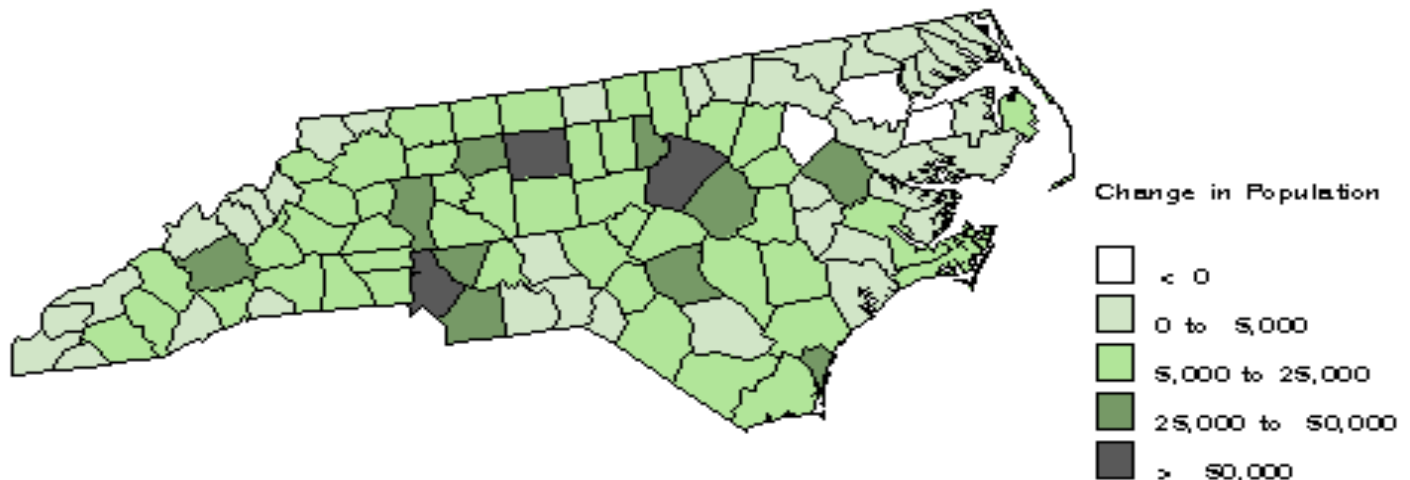
County: Gaston / Acres: 170
Total Easement Cost: \$300,000
Average per acre: \$1,765
Federal payment amount: \$150,000
Percentage: 50%

County: Rowan / Acres: 241
Total Easement Cost: \$400,000
Average per acre: \$1,660
Federal payment amount: \$163,800
Percentage: 41%

NORTH CAROLINA TOTALS:

ACRES: 1,022
EASEMENT COSTS: \$1,926,382
AVERAGE PER ACRE: \$1,885
FEDERAL PAYMENT AMOUNT:
\$904,944
PERCENTAGE: 47%

Difference in Population between 1990 and 2000 North Carolina



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census of Population 2000

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